

APPENDIX C
Public Hearing & Comment Period

City of Harrisonburg Consolidated Plan

PUBLIC HEARING #1

In addition to a published notice of the May 18, 2004, public hearing in Harrisonburg's *Daily News Record*, flyers were distributed throughout the City, with concentrations in LMI neighborhoods, inviting interested persons and organizations to attend the meeting. Additionally, the meeting notification and information was available on the City's website, and the meeting was announced during the televised City Council meeting the week before the Public Hearing.

2005-2007 CONSOLIDATED PLAN PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES May 18, 2004

PRESENT:

STAFF: Kim Alexander, Block Grant Coordinator, Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager

The meeting was brought to order by Mr. Hodgen.

Mr. Hodgen/Ms. Alexander explained what the Consolidated Plan was and that the Plan is required by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for all Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement communities. The Consolidated Plan evaluates local needs, and establishes priorities and goals that are then used to allocate CDBG funds. Each year the City must demonstrate to HUD that CDBG allocations are consistent with the Consolidated Plan. HUD is requiring that all entitlement communities develop a plan.

Mr. Hodgen/Ms. Alexander explained how the Consolidated Plan is developed. The City must rely on information contained in the 2000 Census data, information provided by various agencies, building permit information, and home sales data.

Mr. Hodgen stated that the Plan will be available for a 30 day public comment period beginning June 8, 2004. The Plan will be posted on the City's web site (www.ci.harrisonburg.va.us) with a discussion box for comments. Copies of the Plan would also be available at the City Manager's Office and the Massanutten Regional Library. Both written and oral comments will be accepted. At the closing of the public comment period (July 7, 2004), staff will consider all comments submitted, and finalize the plan.

On July 13, 2004, the plan will then be presented to the City Council for approval. Following Council approval, the Plan will be submitted to HUD.

COMMENTS FROM ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED:

Though the original intent of this Public Hearing was to obtain citizen input regarding funding priorities, the majority of the citizen comment period of the Public Hearing was spent answering citizen and organization questions regarding eligibility requirements and eligible activities. Surveys were distributed at the Public Hearing soliciting funding priorities, and this survey was also made available on the City website. To date, the City has received 40 survey responses. Survey responses indicate the following priorities:

1. Health Care Services
2. Affordable Housing (including public housing)
3. Child Care (in-school & after school)
4. Transportation Services
5. Homeless / Emergency Services
6. Sidewalks & Pedestrian Infrastructure
7. Job Creation / Retention
8. Latino Community
9. Recreational Services / Kids Activities
10. Dental Services
11. Parks / Playgrounds
12. Disabled Services
13. Employment Services / Job Training
14. ESOL Programs
15. Handicapped Accessibility

Of these "Top 15", projects in each of the priority areas (except one) were funded. The only priority which did not receive a funding recommendation was "Dental Services", because there was no project submitted addressing that need.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

ORGANIZATIONS IN ATTENDANCE:

Our Community Place
Camp Still Meadows
Community Association for Rural Transportation (CART)
Community Resource Center
Mercy House
Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA)
Harrisonburg Parks & Recreation Department
Valley Associates for Independent Living, Inc. (VAIL)
The Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) of Harrisonburg/Rockingham
Harrisonburg Children's Museum
Training to Achieve Rewarding Careers, Inc. (TARC)
James Madison University
Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR)
Friends of Blacks Run Greenway (FBRG)
Northeast Sports Association
WSVA
Daily News Record

There were 23 individuals and 2 staff in attendance, for a total of 25 persons present.

PUBLIC HEARING #2

The second Public Hearing was also advertised in the *Daily News Record*, on the City website, and during a televised City Council meeting.

2005-2007 CONSOLIDATED PLAN PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES June 7, 2004

PRESENT:

STAFF: Kim Alexander, Block Grant Coordinator, Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager

The meeting was brought to order by Mr. Hodgen.

Mr. Hodgen introduced himself and Ms. Alexander, and he explained the CDBG process and the contents of the Consolidated Plan Executive Summary. Mr. Hodgen explained the 30 day public comment period, which was scheduled to begin the following day, and he informed the audience that this period would be followed by the City Council's adoption of the Plan on July 13, 2004, and then the Plan would be submitted to HUD.

The Executive Director of The ARC (Association of Retarded Citizens) of Harrisonburg/Rockingham asked whether it would be the new Council or the current Council that would approve the Plan. Mr. Hodgen responded that it would be the new Council, however they are being kept abreast of the process.

Mr. Hodgen then passed out copies of the full Consolidated Plan. He highlighted the main sections of the Plan, the most significant priority housing needs, and the most significant non-housing community development needs. Mr. Hodgen also passed out copies of the Consolidated Plan Executive Summary handouts prepared by City staff prior to the meeting. This handout included a listing of funding recommendations for FY 04-05 CDBG funds. Mr. Hodgen pointed out that the City has already received preliminary approval of these recommendations from HUD. Mr. Hodgen emphasized that, over the next 30 days, the City would

encourage citizens and organizations to submit comments and suggestions, and he stated that those comments (or a summary thereof) would be submitted to HUD with the Plan.

Ms. Alexander asked that all questions regarding the lack of funding to specific projects or for specific purposes be directed to her on an individual basis.

Mr. Hodgen stated that the City was very impressed with the turnout and the quality of the applications submitted.

The President of the Board of Directors of the Community Association for Rural Transportation (CART) stated that Ms. Alexander was very responsive throughout the application process, and that Ms. Alexander did a great job responding to the needs of her organization pertaining to the application and obtaining answers from HUD regarding project eligibility and other issues. She also asked if the organizations being recommended for CDBG funding have any latitude with the funding they will receive. Ms. Alexander responded, saying that it varies depending on the project, and that she would discuss this with the funded organizations on an individual basis. Mr. Hodgen re-emphasized these statements.

The Executive Director of the Mercy House re-emphasized CART's comments on Ms. Alexander's responsiveness. She also asked if organizations could request program funds for the same items or programs in subsequent years. Mr. Hodgen responded, saying that there is no prohibition against this, but the decision is ultimately up to the City Council, and they could decide not to fund the same projects year after year.

Ms. Alexander pointed out that applicants for CDBG funding should note particularly Tables 1C and 2C in the Plan, and that future projects must meet the needs and objectives outlined in these Tables.

Mr. Hodgen again encouraged citizen comments and review of the Consolidated Plan.

Ms. Alexander thanked all of the organizations that assisted the City in the development of this Plan, particularly the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

ORGANIZATIONS IN ATTENDANCE:

Community Association for Rural Transportation (CART)
Mercy House
Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA)
Valley Associates for Independent Living, Inc. (VAIL)
The Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) of Harrisonburg/Rockingham
Harrisonburg Children's Museum
Training to Achieve Rewarding Careers, Inc. (TARC)
Roberta Webb Child Care Center
Gemeinschaft Home
WSVA
Daily News Record

There were 16 individuals and 2 staff in attendance, for a total of 18 persons present.

COMMENT PERIOD:

On June 18, 2004, the following was published in the Daily News Record:

**PUBLIC NOTICE
SUMMARY
CITY OF HARRISONBURG CONSOLIDATED PLAN 2005-2007**

The Consolidated Plan was developed by the City in conformance with HUD requirements for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement communities. The purpose of the Plan is to take a comprehensive look at the City's housing and community development needs and identify priority needs and how those needs could be met with CDBG and other federal funds. The Plan also provides a basis for assessment of annual progress in meeting identified needs. This Plan will cover the City's first three years as an entitlement community.

In developing the Plan, the City used Census information, housing market data, and information provided by numerous local agencies serving low and moderate income clients. This summary is intended to provide an overview of the issues addressed in the Plan.

The Plan evaluates housing needs of three categories of owners and renters -- extremely low income (0-30% of median), low-income (51-80% of median), and moderate income (81-99% of median). Additionally, special housing needs of the elderly and other subpopulations are also assessed. Based on the information collected, it appears that the most significant housing related needs are rehabilitation of public housing units; transitional housing; demand for single floor rental units for the elderly; demand for 1 and 2 bedroom rental units; elimination of accessibility barriers for elderly and disabled; rental rehabilitation projects to benefit the very lowest-income households, especially large families, and 2-4 person households; additional rent assistance for extremely low-income families; owner-occupied rehabilitation especially for low and extremely low-income households; assistance to low- and moderate-income renters for home purchase; and revitalization of older neighborhoods.

The Plan evaluates the condition and adequacy of the housing supply. There appears to be a demand for affordable rental housing units, and much of the housing stock that is available is in need of rehabilitation. The units owned by the Housing Authority are among those in need of rehabilitation. Homeless facilities appear to be sufficient to meet the needs of the temporarily homeless, although in some cases there are not enough facilities to house all homeless families together. Additionally, the need for transitional housing has been identified. The condition of the City's older housing stock should be addressed, and this could be done as part of an overall neighborhood revitalization strategy which would also include investment in public infrastructure, amenities and services. The City does not feel that any local policies exist which would constitute a barrier to affordable housing; discussions with the Housing Authority confirm this. City staff has taken and will continue to take actions to better coordinate CDBG funded activities with activities and programs of other agencies.

The plan also addresses projects that may be undertaken over the upcoming 3 year plan period relative to CDBG funding of non-housing related activities including, but not limited to, public services, economic development, community / public facilities and infrastructure development, and planning and administration activities. The most significant non-housing community development needs are Health Care Services; Dental Services; Child Care; Transportation Services; Sidewalks & Pedestrian Infrastructure (especially sidewalk improvements to business districts from elderly / disabled housing units); Homeless/Emergency Services; Job Creation/Retention; Recreational Services (especially youth services); Parks & Playgrounds; Disabled Services; and Employment Services & Job Training.

Copies of the Consolidated Plan are available for a 30 day public comment and review period which began June 8, 2004 at the City Manager's Office, 345 South Main Street, Harrisonburg between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday thru Friday, and at the reference desk at the Massanutten Regional Library. It is also posted on the Harrisonburg Web site at www.ci.harrisonburg.va.us. This plan also includes a listing of projects that will be recommended to receive funding in FY 04-05. Comments can be submitted in writing to the City Manager's Office, ATTN: Consolidated Plan, 345 South Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801 or by calling (540) 432-8923 or emailing CDBG@ci.harrisonburg.va.us.

**CITY OF HARRISONBURG CONSOLIDATED PLAN
2005-2007 STRATEGIC PLAN & 2005 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN
PUBLIC COMMENTS SUMMARY & CITY RESPONSE**

Harrisonburg's 30-day Public Comment Period ran from June 8, 2004, to July 7, 2004. During this time, the City received fourteen letters regarding the proposed projects to be funded in FY 04-05. The first letter expressed support for funding to the Boys & Girls Club, the Roberta Webb Child Care Center, the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Free Clinic, and the Mercy House. The letter stated that "supporting [the first three] agencies, specifically, would have the most far-reaching and substantial impact on 'low- to moderate- income residents..." and noted that "the need to address the issue of the lack of security equipment [at the Mercy House] is long overdue." The sender also expressed concern regarding funding to Gemeinschaft, at which he was a resident in 2003. Specifically, he was concerned that the majority of the residents in this program may not be residents of the Harrisonburg area. The City's chose to fund each of these projects, including the Gemeinschaft project. However, in our contract with Gemeinschaft, we will require that a proportion of residents at the housing complex to be assisted with CDBG funds be persons who were residents of the Harrisonburg area prior to incarceration, to ensure that Harrisonburg CDBG funds are not benefiting out-of area residents who simply happened to be incarcerated in this area.

Three of the letters received by the City expressed support of a project proposed by the area's Community Resource Center (CRC). This project, though initially selected for funding by the City's Application Review Team, will not be recommended for funding, based on a determination of ineligibility by HUD. This determination of ineligibility is a result of a lack of sufficient monitoring and tracking procedures that would document LMI benefit. City responses to these letters included reasons for ineligibility and assurances that the City understands the value of this project and that the City will continue to work with the CRC on this and other projects, as appropriate.

The CRC submitted a second proposal (jointly with the Housing Authority) during the initial application process, which was not funded, though it was eligible. This proposal was for a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) project, and it was the only eligible project that was not recommended for CDBG funds. One of the letters received by the City during the public comment period was a request by the CRC for reconsideration of this proposal, and it reduced the requested funding from \$33, 920 to \$10,000. There were nine other letters submitted during the public comment period in support of this request, and the City Manager's Office received two visits from persons expressing their concern for this project and its lack of funding. The City reconsidered this project and decided to recommend funding in the amount of \$6,000, which was the remaining balance in the Public Services category, under which the project is eligible.

In addition to these letters, the City received oral comments from three individuals – two in person, one via telephone – and four emails. The first resident requested that funding be use for crosswalks, sidewalk improvements, and covered bus stop stations in LMI areas; the City is funding one sidewalk project this year. The second resident requested that funds be used for public service programs and training that teach people self-sufficiency and self-esteem building, so that they can learn to be independent, rather than relying on the government for support; the City is funding two programs that contain some elements of this intent, the Mercy House public service project and the TARC project. The third resident called to express his support for and appreciation of funding for the Roberta Webb Child Care Center. Three of the emails also expressed support and gratitude for the recommendation of funding for the Roberta Webb Child Care Center. The fourth email expressed disdain that some citizens are listing sidewalk improvements as a priority above health care.

During the public comment period, the City also received a petition stating "I strongly support the use of \$25,350 in Community Development Block Grant funds for playground equipment and fencing at Roberta Webb Child Care Center." This supportive petition was signed by 66 individuals.

Also, the City posted a CDBG Priority Poll on the City website, asking citizens to vote for their #1 priority out of the following options: Health Care Services, Dental Services, Affordable Housing, Child Care, Transportation, Homeless Services, Sidewalks, Jobs & Training, and Other. Eight votes were cast by the close of the public comment period (July 7, 2004, 5:00pm). Results were as follows: one vote each was cast for Health Care Services, Dental Services, Sidewalks, and Other, and four votes were cast for Homeless Services.

Finally, it should be noted that 40 funding-priority survey responses were returned to the City, and projects addressing 14 of the top 15 priorities have been recommended for funding by the City. The only priority that was not included in funding recommendations was Dental Services. It was left out due to the fact that no project funding requests were submitted to the City that responded to that need.

Comments received after the 30-day Public Comment Period (ending July 7, 2004) will not be included in this appendix. However, all comments, regardless of when they are received, will be maintained in the City's CDBG files, along with the City's responses to those comments.